

All About

Learn Greek Grammar

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3

A large, thick blue circular arc that forms the right side of a circle, framing the text 'Grammar Points' and the number 2.

Grammar Points

2

Grammar Points

The Focus of This Lesson is Basic Greek Grammar

The big bad G-word - nothing to be scared of, just a few words we need to introduce to you.

Reviewing English Grammar

Before we look at Greek grammar, let's quickly review English grammar.

English is an SVO language, meaning "Subject-Verb-Object."

For Example:

1. "I eat fruit."
"I" = subject
"eat" = verb
"fruit" = object

Greek is the same as English where you have the Subject-Verb-Object.

English has three simple tenses: present, past, and future. The tense of the verb mainly refers to the "time" of the action of the verb (present, past, or future time). In Greek, however, although time does bear upon the meaning of tense, the primary consideration of the tense of the verb is not time, but rather the "kind of action" that the verb portrays. The most important element in Greek tense is the kind of action; time is regarded as a secondary element. For this reason, many grammarians have adopted the German word *aktionsart* ("kind of action") to be able to more easily refer to this phenomenon of Greek verbs.

The kind of action, *aktionsart*, of a Greek verb will generally fall into one of three categories.



1. **Continuous** or "progressive" kind of action
2. **Completed** or "accomplished" kind of action with continuing results
3. **Simple occurrence**, or "summary occurrence" without reference to the question of progress

Gender

In English, some nouns are automatically thought of as masculine or feminine such as "king," "man," "queen," or "woman." We refer to everything else as "it" or having no gender such as "pencil," "dog," etc.

In Greek, however, we assign gender to all nouns. Some of them, such as the words for man and woman, go into the natural classification. Unlike English, nouns that we would think of as "it" (having no gender) are arbitrarily classified into one of these three categories. Here are some examples.

Gender	Greek	"English"
Masculine	άντρας	"man"
	πατέρας	"father"
	κύκλος	"circle"
Feminine	γυναίκα	"woman"
	μητέρα	"mother"
	στέγη	"roof"
Neuter	μολυβί	"pencil"
	λεπτό	"minute"
	κορίτσι	"girl"

As you'll notice, there are some surprises, too. Would you have guessed that the word for "girl" is neuter? The question then becomes how you determine a noun's gender.

Determining Gender

If a noun appears in isolation, the end of the word will give you some clues as to

what gender the word is.

1. If a noun ends in: **-ης** or **-ας**, it's probably masculine
2. If it ends with: **-α** or **-η**, it's probably feminine
3. If it ends with: **-ο**, **-ι**, or **-μα**, it's neuter

There are, however, exceptions, and also some words that end with **-ος**, which can be any gender. Luckily for us, nouns don't exist in isolation. In Greek, as in English, you'll almost always find a noun in company with an article.

Articles

English has three articles: the definite article, "the," and the indefinite articles "a" and "an."

Greek also has these articles, and they also have gender! Yes, that means there's one form of "the" for use with masculine nouns, one for use with feminine, and one for use with neuter. Let's look at the definite article.

The Definite Article: "the"

Gender (Greek Article)	Greek	"English"
Masculine (ο)	ο άντρας	"the man"
	ο πατέρας	"the father"
	ο κύκλος	"the circle"
Feminine (η)	η γυναίκα	"the woman"
	η μητέρα	"the mother"
	η στέγη	"the roof"
Neuter (το)	το μολυβί	"the pencil"
	το λεπτό	"the minute"
	το κορίτσι	"the girl"

The Indefinite Article: "a" or "an"

The indefinite article in English is "a" or "an," depending upon whether the word begins with a vowel sound or not. The indefinite article in Greek is shown below,

and as with the definite article, it comes in three genders to match its noun.

Gender (Greek Article)	Greek	"English"
Masculine (ένας)	ένας άντρας	"a man"
	ένας πατέρας	"a father"
	ένας κύκλος	"a circle"
Feminine (μία)	μία γυναίκα	"a woman"
	μία μητέρα	"a mother"
	μία στέγη	"a roof"
Neuter (ένα)	ένα μολυβί	"a pencil"
	ένα λεπτό	"a minute"
	ένα κορίτσι	"a girl"

Plurals of Nouns

Of course, we don't just talk about "one book," or "a book." Sometimes we have to talk about "books," or "two books," or "many books." To make an English noun plural, we usually add -s or -es to the end. "Book" becomes "books"; "fox" becomes "foxes", etc. Making a noun plural in Greek requires knowing both its gender and the letters with which it ends. Take a deep breath, because here we go.

	Singular Greek	"English"	Plural Greek	"English"
Masculine	άντρας	"man"	άντρες	"men"
	πατέρας	"father"	πατέρες	"fathers"
	κύκλος	"circle"	κύκλοι	"circles"
Feminine	γυναίκα	"woman"	γυναίκες	"women"
	μητέρα	"mother"	μυτερές	"mothers"
	στέγη	"roof"	στέγες	"roofs"
Neuter	μολυβί	"pencil"	μολύβια	"pencils"
	λεπτό	"minute"	λεπτά	"minutes"
	κορίτσι	"girl"	κορίτσια	"girls"

The Plural Definite Article

We've already seen that the definite article agrees with its noun's gender. The definite article also must agree with the noun's number. Yes, this means that the definite article has a plural form for each of masculine, feminine, and neuter nouns. Here's an updated table.

	Singular Greek	"English"	Plural Greek	"English"
Masculine	Ο άντρας	"man"	Οι άντρες	"men"
	Ο πατέρας	"father"	Οι πατέρες	"fathers"
	Ο κύκλος	"circle"	Οι κύκλοι	"circles"
Feminine	Η γυναίκα	"woman"	Οι γυναίκες	"women"
	Η μητέρα	"mother"	Οι μητέρες	"mothers"
	Η στέγη	"roof"	Οι στέγες	"roofs"
Neuter	Το μολύβι	"pencil"	Τα μολύβια	"pencils"
	Το λεφτό	"minute"	Τα λεφτά	"minutes"
	Το κορίτσι	"girl"	Τα κορίτσια	"girls"

Pronouns

Pronouns are that small class of words found in many languages that we use as replacements or substitutes for nouns and noun phrases, and that have a very general reference. Things such as "I," "you," "he," "this," etc.

If we didn't have pronouns in English, we'd have to talk like this:

"My brother lives in Maryland. My brother works for the government. My brother is married, and my brother's wife works as a paralegal. I visit my brother and my brother's wife twice a year."

Ye cats! Aren't we lucky we have pronouns-words that take the place of a noun-to simplify our lives and avoid that horrible, lengthy repetition? Try this instead:

"My brother lives in Maryland. He works for the government. He is married, and his wife works as a paralegal. I visit him and his wife twice a year."

Pronouns have person, which tell us who's talking or whom we're talking about. Here's a chart of the English pronouns.

	Singular	Plural
First Person	"I"	"we"
Second Person	"you"	"you"
Third Person	"he" "she"	"they"

	"it"	
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Notice that English does make a nod to gender in the third person singular. Now, here's the corresponding table in Greek.

	Singular	Plural
First Person	<i>egó</i> (εγώ) "I"	<i>emeís</i> (εμείς) "we"
Second Person	<i>esý</i> (εσύ) "you"	<i>eseís</i> (εσείς) "you"
Third Person	<i>aftós</i> (αυτός) "he"	<i>aftoí</i> (αυτοί) "they," - masculine
	<i>aftí</i> (αυτή) "her"	<i>aftés</i> (αυτές) "they," - feminine
	<i>aftó</i> (αυτό) "it"	<i>aftá</i> (αυτά) "they," - neutral

You'll note that first and second person don't have different forms for masculine, feminine, and neuter. That's because when two people are talking with one another using "I" and "you," their genders are known, and they don't need any different forms to give them a hint.

Conjugation

Generally, a verb describes existence (the first sentence), a condition (the second sentence), or an action (the third sentence).

Let's start our discussion of verbs with one of the most useful verbs in English, "to be."

"To be"

	Singular	Plural
First Person	"I am"	"we are"
Second Person	"you are"	"you are"
Third Person	"he, she, it is"	"they are"

When we combine the pronouns and verb forms, that's called conjugating a verb. You'll notice that the verb "to be" in English has several different forms. Most other verbs, like walk or run, don't change as much.

In Greek, the verb meaning "to be" also needs to be conjugated. Here it is.

	Singular	"English"	Plural	"English"
First Person	<i>egó eimai</i> (εγώ είμαι)	"I am"	<i>emeís eímaste</i> (εμείς είμαστε)	"we are"
Second Person	<i>esý eisai</i> (εσύ είσαι)	"you are"	<i>eseís eísaste</i> (εσείς είσαστε)	"you are"
Third Person	<i>aftós eínai</i> (αυτός είναι)	"he is"	<i>aftoí eínai</i> (αυτοί είναι)	"they are," masculine
	<i>aftí eínai</i> (αυτή είναι)	"she is"	<i>aftés eínai</i> (αυτές είναι)	"they are," feminine
	<i>aftó eínai</i> (αυτό είναι)	"it is"	<i>aftá eínai</i> (αυτά είναι)	"they are," neutral

This verb is irregular in Greek, as it is in English and in almost every other language. You'll just have to memorize its forms. Once you've done this, you'll be in a position to make a complete Greek sentence.

Unique Aspect of Language

The Greek language, because of its flexibility and its mathematical nature, has the unique attribute to describe analytically or synthetically all minor meanings, details, and gradations.

Adjectives

Another important part of speech is the adjective, which is a word that describes a noun. The **bold** words in the sentences below are all adjectives.

1. "The **big** city is in Greece."
2. "The apple is **sweet**."
3. "I read a **good** book."
4. "The **good** books are on the shelf."

Look at the last two sentences. In English, you see that adjectives don't change their form when the noun becomes plural. English adjectives don't care whether their nouns are subjects or objects. In English, an adjective's form never changes.

In Greek, however, adjectives must change their endings to "match" their nouns. An adjective has to match the noun that it modifies:

- number (singular or plural)
- gender (masculine, feminine, or neuter)
- case (nominative, genitive, or accusative)